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Nothing to Fear From the CIA

The director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency spokes yesterday to the American Society of Newspaper Editors meeting in Washington. Regardless of what Richard Helms had to say, that of itself was sufficient to make news; for as Mr. Helms pointed out, in many countries the existence of such an intelligence organization is a state secret whose director and personnel are anonymous.

Applauding Mr. Helm's willingness to appear not only for a public speech but also to representatives of the public media, we also accept at face-value his statement that the CIA is a dedicated, efficient, unbiased, money-saving organization. Helms said people would just have to take his word for it, which we do. No one of course is in a position to judge just how efficient the CIA may be since there is no ordinary, public standard of measurement available.

As for the economical aspects, this similarly belongs in a world of its own; the CIA, for example, cannot be compared with the postal operation or some other service agency. The role of the Central Intelligence Agency, like that of the Army, Navy, Air Force and other elements of the military establishment, ultimately is the preservation of the United States of America from its enemies.

This is an activity that does not lend itself to ordinary economical considerations although the cry goes up constantly that economy be practiced in the Department of Defense.

Mr. Helms probably appeared before the editors' organization from a sense of feeling it necessary to defend the

CIA from its numerous public critics in this country, most of whom either do not know what they are talking about because of the CIA's very necessary obscurity and mystery, or else who are motivated by less obvious reasons than they reveal.

There are those in America who constantly attack all elements of our government which lend protection to that government and the society it serves. Many of these are impelled for reasons of an emotional nature, having an antipathy for any kind of apparatus which is of a nationalistic nature. Others are merely hostile to this nation itself, which is not a matter of mere guesswork since numerous revolutionaries have publicly spoken out in such a vein within the past few years.

Most countries in both totalitarian and democratic societies maintain such organizations as the Central Intelligence Agency, either fragmented among the military services, para-military in nature, or separate entities such as the CIA in the U.S. and the KGB in the Soviet Union.

But only in America would the head of such an organization get up in public and make a speech to a bunch of newspaper editors with an air more befitting the president of a chamber of commerce than a super-spy agency.

Americans have nothing to fear from the CIA; the only concern we should feel is that it may not always do its job, in behalf of the best interests of this country, especially such interests that may oppose those of some other nations, in the best fashion possible.